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“If I Can’t Bake, I Don’t Want To Be Part of Your Revolution”: CODEPINK’s Activist Literacies of Peace and Pie

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"If I Can't Bake, I Don't Want To Be Part of Your Revolution": CODEPINK's Activist Literacies of Peace and Pie

Abby M. Dubisar

Abstract

By focusing on the cookbook *Peace Never Tasted So Sweet*, this article argues that CODEPINK strategically combines peace activist and food literacies to engage audiences in their antiwar efforts, strategies that take on benefits and drawbacks. Although feminist scholars from a variety of disciplines have studied cookbooks, researchers have yet to fully analyze the intersections of gendered activist literacies and cookbooks. Expanding upon arguments promoting food literacies as well as feminist analyses of cookbooks, this article illuminates CODEPINK's efforts to teach readers how to critique military action, recruit peace-workers, build a movement, *and* bake pie.

Food and food discourses hold persuasive power, a notion well understood by teachers who use food themes in their rhetoric and writing classrooms. Veronica House, for example, argues that teaching food themes is an essential act of civic literacy since the world food system is in crisis and educators thus have an obligation to engage students with the intersections of food, environmentalism, and sustainable futures (5). Cookbooks can also be understood as literacy artifacts that represent communities. Contributors to *Recipes for Reading: Community Cookbooks, Stories, Histories*, for example, address narrative elements in community cookbooks (Bower) as well as how the language of recipes defines communities (Cotter). Beyond classroom contexts, activists leverage political arguments by connecting them to food. Understanding such activists' rhetorical strategies helps literacy educators better appreciate how learning about food facilitates other types of learning in public spaces, paralleling the lessons about social justice aided by food literacy for students in House's courses.

Analyzing the 2010 cookbook *Peace Never Tasted So Sweet: Women's Delicious Recipes for a Sweeter World (With Action 'How-tos' and a Few Cookies Thrown in for Good Measure)* showcases peace organization CODEPINK's activist literacies. Examining their complex, potentially subversive gender performance linked to their

literacy practices illustrates the intersections of cooking, gender, and peace. Known for both enacting and subverting gender norms in a wide variety of contexts and public performances, CODEPINK embeds multiple strategies in the space of this one text. As this analysis will illustrate, CODEPINK's cookbook takes on a number of tasks: subverting expectations in place for a cookbook by enacting political messages that connect food and peace, exploring gender's relationship to war, highlighting competing discourses about food, and showcasing ongoing feminist tensions between radical and domestic literacies. I ultimately argue that CODEPINK's cookbook strategically combines methods for engaging with peace activism and directions for preparing food in order to engage audiences in their antiwar efforts. Along the way my analysis uncovers how these strategies also take on benefits and drawbacks.

Food studies scholars have persuasively argued for the inclusion of food in classroom spaces and their justifications illuminate food's many cultural values and persuasive possibilities. Introducing the special issue on "teaching food," *Transformations* guest editor Deirdre Murphy draws upon existing food studies scholarship to note that in addition to the growth of the interdisciplinary food studies field, "the pedagogies of food demonstrate that our experience and analysis of selfhood, the natural and built environment, society, culture, and politics all filter through our engagement with the food we buy, grow, hunt, serve, cook, bake, or eat" (19). Building on these justifications for teaching food and the pedagogical possibilities of understanding food learning as a literacy practice, analyzing an activist cookbook enhances teachers' and students' knowledge on how combining food literacies with activist literacies can be accomplished in the genre of a cookbook.

As this study will show, women peace activists access and utilize diverse platforms to mobilize their messages and negotiate the meanings of food by publishing cookbooks. In such fruitful discursive spaces, women peace activists negotiate gender constructions to creatively articulate public arguments for peace and gendered motivations for mobilizing against war. The metaphor of a cookbook offers a framework for literacy and learning, as authors have titled their texts "cookbooks" whether teaching readers such diverse literacies as how to write code for computing, understand biomedical science, or engage in actual cookery.

For those engaging in literal cookery and producing cookbooks with organizations like churches and other groups, cookbooks communicate the values and priorities of a community. Rosalyn Collings Eves, for example, studies African-American women's cookbooks, arguing that they function rhetorically. The cookbooks exist to "memorialize both individuals and community [and] to generate a sense of collective memory that in turn shapes communal identity (281). Writing about online cooking websites, Elizabeth Fleitz also identifies community values from both single- and group-authored sites and understands single recipes as community texts, connecting such communal discourse to gendered literacy. Fleitz understands the writing of cooking as a gendered practice with a long history, arguing:

Because women's literacy was devalued, women had to develop a new, useful literacy that would permit their communication practices to continue while

fulfilling the duties of their gender role. This type of literacy needed to be adaptable, with the ability to create and sustain strong networks of women. Thus, because of gender constraints, women developed literacy practices that relied on a variety of modes, creating flexible, open texts which are dialectic in nature and work to maintain bonds with others in the community. (4)

Resonant with Fleitz's observation, CODEPINK literally mixes the cooking literacies expected in a traditional cookbook with instructions on activist actions and strategies, pushing the boundaries of the genre while strategically utilizing a text available to women and tapping into a growing network of women activists.

Food as a Peace Issue

Food and peace come together in a long tradition started generations before CODEPINK published their book, yet their twenty-first century take on this intersection reveals considerable meanings for scholars interested the cookbook genre as a mode of literacy and cookbooks as artifacts of a community, as well as the intersections of food, war, and peace. As the rest of this analysis will demonstrate, CODEPINK's 2010 cookbook, published in conjunction with Mother's Day, uniquely offers instructions for how to critique military action, recruit peace-workers, build a movement, *and* bake pie.

Throughout the history of peace activism, women have positioned food as a peace issue, whether addressing the prevalence of food insecurity as a weapon of war or characterizing the ways in which women's traditional role of preparing food accommodates gendered pro-peace performance. For example, reflecting on her peace work, Jane Addams, president of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Nobel Peace Prize winner, saw food and women's affiliated roles as essential for peace. Drawing on her experience working with the U.S. Food Administration, she wrote, "I hoped to find some trace of woman's recognition of her obligation to feed the world and of her discovery that such a duty was incompatible with warfare" (144). Broadening her claim, Addams continued, "I firmly believed that through an effort to feed hungry people, a new and powerful force might be unloosed in the world and would in the future have to be reckoned with as a factor in international affairs" (146). Thus, women's traditional role as food authorities positioned them to play an active role in diplomacy. In Addams's estimation, women's performance of gender roles and domestic expertise in war came to fruition through food.

A generation later, New York members of Grandmothers Against the War armed themselves with buckets of cookies when they arrived at a Times Square military recruiting station to enlist, positioning their aged bodies as disposable, unlike those of young military recruits, their grandchildren, with long lives ahead of them. To make their argument that war defines bodies and lives as disposable, the women balanced the embodied icon of the non-threatening, baking grandma with the direct confrontation of a protest. The women chanted, "We insist we enlist!" (Wile

14) as they occupied the recruiting station and drew a crowd, eventually arrested and removed.

Additional discourses that rely on food to argue for peace include other peace organizations' cookbooks that come before CODEPINK's and establish a small yet vibrant tradition of such cookbooks. Other books of this kind include the 1968 and 1970 volumes of *Peace De Resistance* by members of Los Angeles's Women Strike for Peace (WSP) and the 1973 Greenwich Village Peace Center's cookbook *Peacemeal*. Often created for fundraising purposes, these cookbooks sometimes connect peace with baking specifically, as bake sales are traditional ways women can raise money for organizations and operate a gendered economy to support social justice causes. *The Great Day Cookbook*, for example, created by Velia Dean and Barbara B. J. Zimmerman of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, draws its title from the iconic quotation, "It will be a great day when our schools get all the money they need and the air force has to hold a bake sale to buy a bomber" (n. pag.). This quotation also reveals the power differential between militarism and peace, as one is massively funded and the other is not.

Although gender scholars beyond literacy studies have analyzed cookbooks, including history (Neuhaus), rhetoric (Eves, Fleitz, Hess, White-Farnham), communication studies (West), and popular culture (Bower), researchers have yet to fully consider the intersections of gendered antiwar activism and cookbooks nor the combined literacy promotion of cooking and activism. Scholars cannot have a robust understanding of women's peace activism literacies and their engagement with food without considering this genre.

CODEPINK's Deployment of Gendered Activism

To engage with the cookbook genre while also promoting their version of gendered antiwar activism, CODEPINK uses strategies that, on the one hand, position food as a peace issue and subvert expectations for gender norms, yet, on the other hand, take on the risk of sacrificing persuasive power in the interest of reifying the cookbook form and normative gender politics. Such inventive yet limited strategies further the tradition that CODEPINK established from their start, combining peace with gender performance, such as teaching strategies to actively reject the United States' practice of militarism with non-threatening practices like knitting.

Established in 2002, CODEPINK initiated its organization to stop the United States from invading Iraq. Since its inception, CODEPINK activists have performed a wide variety of rhetorical strategies to enact their causes. Addressing the readers of *Women's Studies Quarterly* in 2006, CODEPINK Coordinator for the New York City Chapter Nancy Kricorian writes of her organization, "You might have seen us around. We dress in pink and we make a ruckus" (532), succinctly summing up the rhetorical style and recognizable approaches the organization has become known for since their work began.

In an interview published in *Feminist Studies*, CODEPINK co-founder Jodie Evans accounts for her group's success in the immediacy and diversity of their strategies. She describes their approaches that build upon a number of tactics:

The power of the visuals, the clear and powerful articulation of the message, the creativity, and the community of women. Being on the moment; when something happens we are there, with the research, with the direct connection to the human piece, with the humor, with the courage to be in places that are unexpected, bold, colorful, and speaking truth to power. Our actions inspire, they make people feel good, they bring people forward, they speak to the immediate, they take away the sense of powerlessness and move people into action, they also have hope and future in them. (Groves 200)

The role of community is essential to CODEPINK and the group's boundaries are porous; anyone can join. Likewise, their use of multimodal literacies aids their thorough and amplified broadcast of their ideas.

Studied by academics not only in expected contexts like women's studies (Kutz-Flamenbaum), but also in such diverse fields as law (Abrams), history (Moravec), international development (Milazzo), and media citizenship (Simone), CODEPINK both fits into the rich and long-standing tradition of American women's peace activism and the literacy events audiences expect such as delivering speeches, yet also invents new styles and strategies. For example, Kutz-Flamenbaum describes CODEPINK's strategic and accessible use of the color pink. At action events, established CODEPINK leaders make available pink colored clothing that new participants may take and wear in order to identify with the group and immediately become a part of an action, a wholly invitational strategy. Commenting on their ability to use multiple strategies at once, she writes, "The emphasis on women's role as pacifist caregivers presents a nonthreatening image of women activists... [reassuring] observers and new adherents that activists can be feminine and soft. Simultaneously, Code Pink's use of civil disobedience and aggressive trailing of public officials confound and challenge normative gender expectations of women as passive, polite, and well-behaved" (95). The cookbook also enacts this paired approach of nonthreatening femininity, the woman baker making tasty treats, with radicalism, the woman peace activist who is informed and forthright about military policy and spending.

Kathryn Abrams analyzes CODEPINK together with the work of California activist Cindy Sheehan and the antiwar movement Women in Black in order to understand how gendered citizenship is performed against war. Regarding CODEPINK, she writes of its incongruities and how they uphold multiple understandings of gender and women's power. According to Abrams, CODEPINK:

project[s] a paradoxical yet vehement image of citizenship: one in which improvisation aims at maximizing impact and reanimating politics; one in which proliferation, of activities and of personae, signals singularity of political will; and one in which exaggerated femininity—long read as the sign of apolitical triviality—is married to daring and committed public engagement. (852)

This very idea of flipping the expectations for apolitical triviality as a mark of femininity surfaces as a core feature of the cookbook, as the community cookbook originated as a gendered text. Thus, CODEPINK builds on that expectation that women write community cookbooks, yet subverts the cookbook's contents and persuasive potential.

Women's charity cookbooks that intervened in war launched the community cookbook genre. According to Food Studies scholar Andrew Smith, Maria J. Moss wrote her 1864 *Poetical Cookbook* to subsidize medical costs for Union soldiers injured in the Civil War (Stoller-Conrad). This origin of the communal cookbook is confirmed by Almagno, Reynolds, and Trimbur who write that Civil War "Ladies Aid Societies gathered recipes in collections to sell at fund-raising bazaars for war relief, instituting a longstanding tradition that links domestic recipes to women's public charitable work" (179). By the end of the nineteenth century, over two thousand such cookbooks had been published by charitable organizations, showing how popular such combined efforts of cookery and service had become (Almagno et al 179). Community cookbooks also became a vehicle for suffrage activists to promote their cause and raise money. A 1915 suffrage cookbook both connects food to political citizenship and calls for a pedagogy of eating when it declares:

Eating and drinking are so essential to our living and to our usefulness, and so directly involved with our future state, that these must be classed with our sacred duties. Hence the necessity for so educating the children that they will know how to live, and how to develop into hale, hearty and wholesome men and women, thus insuring the best possible social and political conditions for the people of this country. (Kleber 7)

Eating well here is a national issue. Positioning women as professional nurturers who raise children with proper food education to ensure future national prosperity tempers the core issue at hand, women gaining the vote. In fact, because women must play such an essential role, enfranchising them through the vote fulfills full participation. Within this suffrage cookbook the issue of gendered peace activism surfaces as well. Mrs. Henry Villard, president of the Women's Peace Conference, issues a call to replace war's hatred, revenge, and cruelty with qualities that reflect "our" nature: compassion, gentleness, and forgiveness (Kleber 34). Following Villard's short essay is a photographic portrait of Jane Addams, who audiences are assumed to recognize since no biographical details are included. Both issues of suffrage and peace

become connected in this suffrage cookbook that embeds political philosophy with its recipes, as the page following Addams's portrait is a recipe for Boiled White Fish.

CODEPINK continues this tradition with their cookbook, but positions it as a device that reflects their tailored and specific strategies. Here again the organization consistently uses gendered tropes to both subvert expected, normative feminine gender roles and engage accessible, gendered platforms. In the introduction to *Peace Never Tasted So Sweet*, CODEPINK founders Medea Benjamin and Jodie Evans position peace both as a social justice issue and an economic one, ripe for gendered intervention:

To honor and embody Julia Ward Howe's original anti-war intention for Mother's Day, over the years we have gathered in parks and on beaches and bridges and in front of the White House to say "We, the women of one country,/Will be too tender to those of another country/To allow our sons to be trained to injure theirs." This year, not only will we be too tender—so will our pie crusts! We were inspired to create pies of peace after the 2011 US Federal Budget came out in February of this year and the United States military cut an unhealthy 48% piece of pie entirely for themselves and their wars. (Abileah and Hallock 1)

The introduction continues to pun on terms like "dough" that connect military spending and food, energizing readers to engage the book's lessons on activism by connecting them to baking. Thus, the cookbook format becomes a vehicle to disseminate activist strategies. In publishing their strategies under the guise of a cookbook, four themes emerge: the subversion of genre expectations for a cookbook by enacting political messages that connect food and peace, an exploration of gender's relationship to war, an intersectional featuring of competing discourses about food, and an embraced representation of ongoing feminist tensions between the radical and domestic.

Theme One:

Cooking up Peace By Subverting Gender and Genre

Peace Never Tasted So Sweet subverts expectations for a cookbook because it not only includes recipes for such pastries as "Lemon Cloud Pie" and "Chocolate Layer Torte," but also features conceptual recipes and instructions for organizing and taking action like "The Ultimate Recipe Peace Pie Party." The book itself is pink and the cover features photographs of women baking together and feeding one another, thus presenting the appearance of a cohesive yet diverse community of women. The individuals pictured include both children and adults, also representing an array of racial and ethnic identities.

While the written introduction immediately positions the book as a political document, the pie graph of U.S. budget priorities on the following page becomes the first evidence of the tools CODEPINK provides for its readers, as it features the proportions of money dedicated to the Pentagon, Iraq and Afghanistan military involvement, as well as the much smaller slices for veterans, health, education, justice, housing and other social needs. CODEPINK uses the pie chart as a call to action, stating, “To protest your money being spent mostly on war, call your congressperson, stop paying your war taxes, or follow the action recipes in this book!” (2). The first recipe, for peace parties, outlines the resources needed to host events that build partnerships and facilitate learning from one another for planning actions and political events, written in the form of a recipe with ingredients and step-by-step instructions. For new activists, such didactic material offers details for lessons learned by seasoned CODEPINK activists. The “recipe” suggests organizers can use social media to invite as many participants as possible, potentially hold a “peace pie bake sale,” decorate the space with pink to affiliate with CODEPINK, provide food, and make people feel welcome. The recipe also provides the telephone number for the congressional switchboard so attendees can call their Congressperson “to ask her or him to stop funding war and bring their tax dollars home to communities in need... Don’t worry if it’s late. The switchboard will be operating and you can always leave a message for your Congressperson. Democracy never sleeps!” (5). The excited tone of this recipe for a gathering energizes readers when planning such an event may seem overwhelming.

Later in the book, another action recipe, for “radio pie,” instructs readers on how to prepare for a radio interview. Contributor Josie Lenwell states that she always schedules an interview with a local talk show host in her hometown of Taos, New Mexico, within a week of returning from a CODEPINK event in Washington, D.C. Again building on food metaphors, the instructions indicate, “Most peace actions should be followed up by ‘radio pie.’ Your local radio station is often very hungry for hopeful and sweet news of the average citizen’s quest for Peace and particularly hungry for a CODEPINK action for peace” (14). Readers may not consider radio as an effective outlet and also may not know that instead of waiting to be contacted for an interview, initiative is required to get the word out about their activist work and affiliation with CODEPINK. Thus, Lenwell’s recipe outlines the details for pursuing this publicity venue. Lenwell’s fifteen steps for preparing for and carrying out a successful interview showcase her rhetorical savvy and experience at engaging audiences. She directs readers to have their interview archived on the CODEPINK website to further broadcast their work and ends with the final step of celebrating interview success by eating a slice of a pie from the book (15). For new activists, a radio interview may seem daunting, but Lenwell’s recipe invites readers to understand radio as a productive outlet, making the interview manageable and accessible so they can plan and prepare.

Another “action recipe” that offers communication strategies for engaging the public in antiwar work is Eva-Lee Baird’s “phone-a-thon” pie. A member of the

Granny Peace Brigade as well as New York City’s CODEPINK branch, Baird lists as essential ingredients an “easy-does-it phone script,” a camera to record the action events and later post them to the CODEPINK website to publicize the action, a wide sidewalk busy with people, and bright explanatory posters to clarify for passers-by the engagement at hand. The leader of this action facilitates phone calls, using her own phone, between citizens and their senators and representative. As people walk by and view the signs about withdrawing troops and other peace messages, CODEPINK members invite them to use the available phone to make the call. Baird writes:

This recipe works best during office hours. Callers are excited to speak to a live human in a Congressional office. *It will be a first time for most of the callers* and many will be nervous. You can hear *people overcome their hesitation* as they speak. By the end of the calls their voices will be stronger and more confident. They will leave with the resolve to call again. (54)

Baird boosts readers’ confidence by not only offering these instructions that have worked well for her, but also encouraging them to not be shy.

Baird’s work, and that of CODEPINK writ large, is to facilitate the peace activism of others and spread the desire to resist and enact change. In her introductory remarks, Baird quotes Burmese activist and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi who believes, “when you are feel helpless, help someone” (53), framing the work of CODEPINK as encouraging others to take on the adventure and challenge of peace activism. Photographs of Baird engaging people on the street enhance this recipe, depicting a woman who initially appears surprised at the opportunity Baird offers her and represented on the next page talking on the phone and thus taking up Baird’s offer. Furthermore, Baird’s detailed instructions that include the timing for this practice thoroughly prepare others to host similar events. As a former teacher, Baird’s recipe reads as a sort of lesson plan, paralleling the didactic forms of a recipe and teaching materials.

Other action pie recipes in the book cover effective ways to utilize social media, including how to write effective short messages, mastering persuasive storytelling, and identifying allies and targets; a recipe about building community through communication; and “disturbing the war pie,” which positions activists to prepare for a congressional hearing on the department of defense budget. Submitted by retired Army Colonel Ann Wright, the “disturbing the war pie” recipe draws upon Wright’s knowledge from serving in the military. A former U.S. diplomat, Wright resigned in March, 2003, in opposition to the invasion of Iraq, and has been arrested 15 times in protest of wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. The photograph representing her work features her facing government officials sternly, wearing a shirt that reads, “3800 dead. How many more” (49)? As these examples show, the genre of the recipe serves CODEPINK’s purpose of inviting other activists to become a part of their transnational peace work, adopt their practices, and experiment with their strategies

in new contexts, all justified in the context of a cookbook by relying on food tropes and recipe formats.

Theme Two: Gender's Relationship with War

CODEPINK uses the book as a way to engage gender's relationship to war, a core tenet of their organization and its rhetorical strategies. Since their founding, CODEPINK articulates their gendered position, welcoming men while critiquing patriarchy's relationship to militarism. In the "About Us" section of their website, CODEPINK describes themselves as "women initiated" and positions their organization as a context for women to lead. After addressing the question "What is CODEPINK?" they attend to the question "Why women?" by articulating that "CODEPINK is not exclusively women—we invite men to join us—but we are particularly eager to see mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and daughters, female workers, students, teachers, healers, artists, writers, singers, poets and all outraged woman rise up and oppose the global militarism." Likewise, the prominence of women's leadership comes to fruition in the cookbook initially in the title, as the title phrase "women's delicious recipes" showcases the gendered authority the book features. CODEPINK dedicated *Peace Never Tasted So Sweet* to mothers in Afghanistan, Iraq, and other warzones around the world.

The organization thus hopes to unify women globally as they position all women in preventing war. Such unification is limited or mythical, however, since the cookbook is published in English and reflects most fully the experiences of privileged women who have the time and resources to compose a cookbook. This dedication and the cookbook as a whole also perhaps mask the extremely diverse array of women's experiences in war as well as peace activism. Regarding audience access to the text, a global, fully accessible engagement is impossible since readers must have an internet connection and the financial means to buy the book from publisher Lulu.com or other retailers.

That said, one recipe that furthers this international emphasis on women's roles in peace building is "Put a Smile on My World Cheesecake," submitted by Christine Hasan, Moona Fairouz, and "the kids at Rainbow for Kids Nursery" in the Kingdom of Bahrain, Arabian Gulf (42). In the recipe's introduction, the cheesecake is positioned as a mediator and creator of interpersonal harmony, as it "never ever fails to put a smile on even the angriest of faces." Following the recipe, a note includes the detail that Hasan and the children at Rainbows for Kids organized an International Women's Day event to promote peace in 2010, connecting their event to CODEPINK and Women for Women International. For their action, "Students made pink cupcakes and the women held up signs in Arabic and English saying, 'We are Women, Mothers and Sisters. We build bridges of peace every day. Join us in peace and understanding'" (53). With their recipe, action description, and photo

of their action, Hasan and the children connect the nurturing work of a nursery with the global concern over war and peace-building, framing their roles of daily tasks of childcare with CODEPINK's mission to end war.

Another contributor, Lorene Zarou-Zouzonis, connects her recipe on the broader cultural tradition of women compiling recipe books. Excerpted from a cookbook written by Palestinian women living in Michigan, Zarou-Zouzonis's recipe for "Sfeeha, Meat Pie" facilitates her description of her family's immigration from Palestine to Detroit in the 1960s. A poet, fiction author, peace and human rights activist, and community organizer, Zarou-Zouzonis also has an activist daughter who visited the Gaza Strip with a CODEPINK delegation and later organized a larger student delegation. Thus, Zarou-Zouzonis's contribution not only features a gendered lineage of cooking and writing cookbooks, but also highlights CODEPINK's activist work as multigenerational (59).

Speaking to its diverse representation of connecting gender and activism, following Zarou-Zouzonis's Palestinian recipe is Diane Wilson's recipe for "Cajun Truck Driver's Shrimp Pie," a juxtaposition of food traditions and cuisines not likely found in any other cookbook. Wilson, a Texan, co-founded CODEPINK. A fourth-generation shrimper, Wilson became a boat captain at the age of 24 and continued in such work until she read about toxic pollution and her county's status as its number one producer. This moment prompted her lifelong dedication to environmental justice. Known for her many acts of civil disobedience, Wilson is also legendary for inspiring other women to take action in their communities and beyond (60-61). Such examples show CODEPINK's interest in connecting gender and antiwar activism and engaging with the question of what difference gender makes when layering the additional context of food and cooking on to the antiwar activist context. Further, due to the diversity of women featured, CODEPINK resists positioning gendered approaches to peace activism as singular, but instead publishes the recipes, perspectives, and biographies of women who carry out peace and gender in a wide variety of iterations.

Theme Three: Food and its Meanings For Gender and Peace

As a third theme, the cookbook highlights competing discourses about food. Thus, just as diverse women submitted wide-ranging recipes to the book, a variety of approaches to food and meanings ascribed to food also surface in the cookbook. Such potentially conflicting definitions of a "good" recipe or "good" food reflect the ongoing ambivalence about food in mainstream American culture in recent years. For example, emphasizing locavore practices that highlight seasonal, whole foods can be critiqued as an elitist framework that rewards those with access to land and other material resources with purportedly the tastiest, healthiest food (Pollan). Like labels that use "organic" or other terms that position food as an alternative to conventional

(potentially chemically-laden, toxic) foods, such designations can turn out to be meaningless or simply trendy. That said, some activists see alternative eating practices and avoiding corporate food as ways of enacting their beliefs and promoting social, environmental justice.

One “action pie” recipe specifically connects war to food production. Maria Bravo’s contribution, “Mountain Apple Pie: A Recipe for Budding New Activists,” directs readers to plant apple trees in their own back yards, without chemicals. After five years, when the tree bears fruit, Bravo encourages readers to bake a pie with fresh, organic ingredients. In the final step of the “recipe,” Bravo writes:

You will have so much fun taking care of your tree and watching the wildlife that you will probably want to grow more of your own food...If more people grew some of their food we would use less oil to ship our food around the country and therefore we would not need wars for resources. War kills many innocent people and animals as well as destroying the earth. (44)

Positioning food and its production as antiwar action again subverts the expectation for a cookbook, which requires ingredients for recipes and teaches techniques, but generally does not address how, where, and why to source food from various producers. Bravo encourages readers to buy apples from a local farmer if growing them is not possible, positioning so-called “locavore” practices as politically powerful.

While some people shun prepared foods, for activists and others most interested in saving time that can be dedicated to non-cooking justice work, prepared foods facilitate quick and accessible cuisine. Furthermore, since many of CODEPINK’s members highlight their roles as mothers and caregivers who provide food for others, which involves a great deal of time and labor, they may even more strongly emphasize ways that food needs to provide accessible nutrition at a low cost, rejecting “foodie” culture’s habit of endowing food with semiotic power as fetishized objects.

For CODEPINK contributors, these competing approaches to cooking and eating exist within the same cookbook. While Bravo’s recipe asked bakers to grow their own apples without chemicals and bake a pie five years later when the apples have grown, other recipes such as “No-Bake Healthy Pie” require three immediately accessible ingredients: a prepared graham cracker pie crust, organic French vanilla yogurt, and fresh fruit (39). Poet contributor Dian Sousa also embraces prepared foods, as her recipe for “Pie Cakes” requires only a frozen crumb-top apple pie and one recipe of prepared pancake batter. To accomplish the recipe, cooks chop up the frozen pie and mix it into the pancake batter before making pancakes in the traditional way. Sousa suggests freezing leftover cakes to make ice cream sandwiches (33). Thus, food and cooking can take on many meanings for the cook-activists featured in this single book.

Other food traditions and approaches featured within the book are raw and vegan cooking, both positioned as potentially political eating habits that benefit

health and personal well-being as well as environmental engagements that promote sustainability. Ariel Vegosen’s recipe for “Raw Key Lime Pie” opens with her message: “I recommend using as many local, organic, and Fair Trade ingredients as possible. Avocado and coconut oils are great for you and this will leave you feeling satisfied and guilt-free!” (74). Since the recipe calls for macadamia nuts, coconut, avocado, agave nectar, and coconut oil, cooks using this recipe may feel baffled by where one would have to live to access such ingredients from local producers, yet the advice remains as a way to ideologically frame the values often affiliated with socially-conscious, health-focused eaters.

Such diverse food approaches and politics featured in the context of this single book make an argument for expanding and reflecting upon food’s meanings. Obviously some of these approaches focus on fun and whimsicality, engaging cooks with their inventiveness. Others prompt readers to think about food systems, to consider how foods reflect nationalities and ethnicities, or position food as a way to engage others and make connections across personal boundaries. CODEPINK’s cookbook makes a case for a much more intersectional look at food politics that takes into account diverse motivations and accessibility for cooks living in a wide variety of locations and under various material conditions. What may seem fractured in the cookbook’s identity is actually an underlying argument toward expanding what it means to be a politically conscious eater and activist. The cookbook reflects the complex relationships between food, gender, and peace politics that a single approach to food cannot address.

Theme Four: Gendered Cooking’s Radical, Domestic, and Feminist Tensions

Feminist tensions surrounding the political features of food preparation and other domestic tasks frame another significant theme, including implications of both domesticity and radical politics as sites of struggle. This intersection locates CODEPINK’s cookbook in the context of the “new domesticity” movement that “reclaims” domestic tasks and roles, privileges “making,” and upholds DIY approaches as marks of independence, self-sufficiency, and anti-corporate behavior. Of course such considerations are nothing new for CODEPINK activists, as they have always played with traditional and revolutionary notions of what it means to perform gender.

Quoted in the article title, CODEPINK includes on the back cover of the cookbook the declaration, “If I can’t bake, I don’t want to be part of your revolution.” This position directly addresses tensions regarding feminism, activism, and gendered performance of domestic tasks. This tension has been taken up more recently by writers like Emily Matchar and others who examine the ideological power of “hipster housewives” who embrace both feminism and domesticity, positioning work in the home as the truly radical, progressive action. While women affiliated with

CODEPINK likely position themselves at similar places politically, Matchar points out how “new domesticity” and its DIY ethics writ large appeal to a wide swath of ideologies. Thus, Matchar’s research points out how baking and cooking are flexible signifiers for gender representation. Speaking directly to this colliding discourse, Matchar quotes food philosopher Lisa Heldke:

“This movement can get claimed and co-opted or used by all these different people on different places on the political spectrum’...Heldke jokes that when she brings her homemade bread to a party where she doesn’t know the guests, she has to explain who she is and what the bread means. As in, is she a conservative farmwife or a liberal neo-homesteader? Does the bread symbolize her identity as a modern woman or that she is her grandmother all over again? (214)

This need for gendered justification categorized by Heldke reinforces why CODEPINK uses baking as a way to invite new, perhaps younger, activists into their organization. For women and others, baking and cooking can hold many meanings. Gendered cooking performance, for CODEPINK, occurs outside of the heteronormative family, does not position women as remanded to domestic spaces, but instead operates as an invitational strategy to make events welcoming and get people to engage with the book and CODEPINK’s ideas. Instead of feeding their families, as second-wave women were imagined to do in earlier peace cookbooks, CODEPINK bakers take their baked goods outside the home.

Because the cookbook never directly addresses how and in what ways baking itself is a radical act, however, it does run the risk of being marginalized as a cookbook only, not a radical political action book. Because the “action recipes” are the core materials of the book, their impact may be hidden within the undervalued context of a cookbook. For CODEPINK, baking is an entry point to a conversation and a way to showcase their activist work as accessible, exciting, and essential, but since cookbooks are historically marginalized as insignificant, domestic manuals, their peace mission may be covered by the emphasis on food. However, CODEPINK wants us to break free of this concern that activists cannot be taken seriously when they simultaneously write cookbooks, bake, and engage in radical peace activism.

Scholarship on women’s peace activist cookbooks supports this notion. Isaac West, for example, demonstrates how “women are active agents capable of producing politically progressive identities even as they act within potentially problematic discursive circuitries” (361). In his study of two Vietnam-era cookbooks published by the Los Angeles branch of Women Strike for Peace, West concludes that “mothers who resist militarism *as mothers* by appropriating this interpellation can, and sometimes do, mobilize an important critique of the gendered logics of warfare and the proper role of women as citizens” (377). West’s point can be extended beyond the identity of mother-authority to escape the dichotomy that women-identified activists have to decide whether to embrace the label of bakers or peace activists when also

identifying as women. Thus, the liberal/conservative binary that Heldke characterizes must be deconstructed in order for both gender and peace progress to occur.

CODEPINK is also invested in destabilizing this binary of women as passive domestic workers *or* active political agitators who reject domesticity, as their cookbook takes as a given that women can, and must, take on both roles of peace activist and cook that harness all available means of persuasion. In many ways CODEPINK activists do not have time to attend to gender politics and trendy “new domesticity” explorations and critiques. Their insistence on immediacy, educating publics about military funding and policy, engaging social media, and representing themselves by documenting and broadcasting their activities shows how they cannot trust others to fully represent their work.

Ongoing Implications for Cookbooks as Gendered, Activist Literacy Artifacts

Reading CODEPINK’s cookbook closely highlights both the affordances and limitations of the cookbook genre. While it may be too quickly dismissed as a marginal, minor, domestic text that positions the cookbook in undervalued contexts or pushes it to the periphery of peace activist texts, it is also an essential document for the organization. The cookbook facilitates CODEPINK’s ongoing combination of gendered tropes with activist strategies and is thus a key method for engaging audiences and propelling their messages into all available spaces.

To imagine a continuing progressive tradition for cookbooks as activist discourses, cookbooks must continue to be understood and published as a collective genre that holds multiple meanings. Such flexibility for the genre would ensure an intersectional complexity that accommodates diverse and at times contradictory outlooks on the intersections of food, militarism, gender performance, and patriarchy. Ann Freadman’s concept of genre “uptake” helps illuminate why CODEPINK and other organizations like it need the genre of the cookbook as a powerful discursive tool, one that works with other genres to promote change (39-52). Uptake highlights how genres interact with one another and thus do not exist in isolation. Citing Carolyn Miller’s assertion that genres represent social action, Freadman reinforces how the dynamics of such social action reveal how genres get people to do certain things with one another (40). Thus, the thematic reading of CODEPINK’s book featured here pushes on the possibilities for how a peace cookbook can operate as a literacy artifact and teaching tool when we understand it as one persuasive genre in a wide range of strategies the organization takes on to enact antiwar activism, recruit new members, describe group activities, and more.

As readers “take up” *Peace Never Tasted So Sweet* they experience a range of lessons beyond expectations for a cookbook. CODEPINK builds on the universal need to eat, the drive to cook, and the collective memory of cooking as a cultural practice in order to simultaneously promote activist literacies and their community

values. By continuing to perform close readings of activists' use of various genres, subversive strategies, and intersectional gendered literacies, scholars can better understand how peace activism is evolving in the twenty-first century. Rhetoric and composition instructors especially can utilize texts like *Peace Never Tasted So Sweet* with students to showcase genre flexibility as well as how activists expand their communities through various literacy strategies. To reinforce House's call for instructors to fulfill the obligation of exposing students to food literacies and social justice, the time has never been better to facilitate learning about how social justice activists both instruct and initiate effective strategies.

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Lifting the Lid: How Prison Writing Workshops Shed Light on the Social Shadow

Erec Toso

Abstract

While the social, political, economic, educational, and cultural consequences of high rates of incarceration have been well documented, the social psychological dynamics have not received as much discussion. I offer here a first person narrative reflection on the connections between a writing workshops and raising social awareness of the realities of day-to-day lives of inmates. Appropriate writing pedagogy, personal challenges to meeting to the workshops, and the need to publish inmate stories inform the essay.

When I point my old Subaru south, the familiar butterflies take wing. I drive toward the tracks, the coal-fired power plant, and the state prison, where I will meet the writing workshops. About the time I merge onto the interstate, I get nervous. The reasons are both trivial and close to a live nerve.

I am nervous that I will not do a good job running the workshops. That's the teacher in me, and my apprehension is well founded. The workshops have been going on for almost forty years, and they have a decorated, high-profile history. There is no way I can live up to what Richard Shelton has done with inmate writing—National Book Awards, Endowment for the Humanities grants, and on and on. But I am a teacher and writer and pay attention to the challenges in front of me, which loom large as I approach the Arizona State Prison Complex at the end of Wilmot road.

The "population" of workshop members is a Rubik's Cube of ethnic diversity, previous education, expectations, and attitudes toward writing. It's a challenge not unlike a tough English 101 class, but the racial divides and prison politics, the "shot-callers" and gang affiliations are all there, waiting at the door when the workshop is over, hanging over the yard like a poison cloud. I am not totally naïve about the realities of inmate life, especially in the higher security yards, yet even this is not the core source of my agitation.

I am concerned that I have not sufficiently prepared, that I have forgotten to type or make copies of inmate work, that I am not up to the job of providing what these men need to improve their writing. I feel some of the same butterflies on